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ABSTRACT

California's system of higher education includes three major divisions, each with a separate educational goal resulting in differing minority enrollments. The University of California focuses on research and has high admission requirements. Its nine campuses had 5,200 full-time faculty members in 1979 and enrolled 131,856 undergraduate and graduate students of whom 22,778 identified themselves as minority members (American Indians, Asians, Blacks, or Chicanos). The State Universities and Colleges have less rigid admission standards. The 19 campuses teach 4- and 5-year programs but have less rigid admission standards. They teach 4- and 5-year programs but do not award doctoral degrees. In 1978 the 11,080 faculty members taught 306,801 undergraduate and graduate students of whom 59,331 represented minorities. The 106 community colleges provide access to low-cost education for all students who can profit from instruction, with or without a high school diploma. The Community Colleges provide (or provided, prior to 1980, for the system is currently being redefined) the first two years of a four-year transfer program, occupational training, cultural and continuing education, and community activities and services. Of the 1,100,212 students taught by 14,714 faculty in 1978, 241,135 were minority members. Chicano enrollments were stable between 1976 and 1980. However, financial and legislative circumstances and negative image problems may result in the reduction of minority students at the Community College level. (SB)

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# THE MEXICAN AMERICAN: A CHALLENGE FOR THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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THE MEXICAN AMERICAN: A CHALLENGE FOR THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The California system of higher education is one of the most unique systems in the world. It provides access to all of the residents of the State of California regardless of their academic, social political, cultural, or economic background. The Master Plan of Higher Education of the early 1960's provided a differentiation of functions for each segment of higher education. While the system is somewhat in a state of constant change, the plan provided for each segment to concentrate on a specific goal; therefore, excell in that goal and at the same time provide all residents of the State a place for themselves in the higher education system.

Research would be the sole responsibility of the University of California. The research function is so entrenched in the system that California is unique in that it only allows the University of California to award doctorates. The State Universities and Colleges can only offer masters and bachelors degrees. The University of California is comprised of nine campuses and it enrolled 131,856 students (Fall 1979) and had 52,000 full-time faculty members. The U.C. system conferred 19,811 bachelors, 5315 masters, 1914 doctorates, and 1760

professional degrees in the Fall 1978 semester.[1]

Teaching responsibilities were given to the California State Universities and Colleges who would concentrate on teaching undergraduates and graduate students up to the masters level. The nineteen campuses enrolled 306,801 students. The system awarded 41,842 bachelors and 9,701 masters degrees. The system had 11,080 full-time faculty in 1979-80.[2]

The Community Colleges would provide access to all students who would not be able to qualify for the University of California or the California State Universities and Colleges. Students who could profit from instruction would permitted to enroll in a variety of educational programs. The access of all students into the Community Colleges provided an opportunity for all people who had been denied access an opportunity to start at the level in which they could succeed and then proceed on to transfer to a four-year program or acquire specific job entry level skills.

There are 106 Community Colleges in the California Community College system. The colleges enrolled 1,100,212 students in the Fall 1978 semester and had 14,714 full time faculty members.[3]

Independent colleges and universities are also an important component of the higher education system in California; however, due to time limitations, this paper will not deal with their impact on the Mexican American.[4]

Total enrollment and faculty for the three segments is as follows:

| System | Enrollment | Full Time Faculty |
|---|---|---|
| University of California | 131,856 | 5,200 |
| California State University | 306,801 | 11,080 |
| Community Colleges | 1,100,212 | 14,714 |
| Total | 1,538,869 | 30,994 |

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

The University of California's main responsibility is research. The system admits only the best high school seniors who must meet subject, scholarship, and examination requirements. Students also may qualify for admission by examination alone, or through special admissions. The system is responsible for research that affects every person in the State of California.

The enrollment of minorities in the University of California system as a percentage of the population is low with the exception of the Asian category. The number of students and their respective percentage in the system is as follows:

| | Undergraduate | | Graduate | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| American Indian | 462 | (.57%) | 137 | (.51%) |
| Asian | 9,876 | (15.9%) | 1,963 | (7.52%) |
| Black | 3,274 | (4.01%) | 1,056 | (4.05%) |
| Chicano | 4,631 | (5.07%) | 1,379 | (5.29%) |
| White | 63,466 | (77.67%) | 21,562 | (82.63%) |
| Refused to Identify | | (10%) | | (29%)[5] |

Graduate students refused to identify their ethnicity more times than the undergraduates, i.e., 29% of the graduates compared with 10% of the undergraduates. The reason (s) for refusing to identify ethnic background is a research proposal in itself. Some researchers and publishers of reports have relied on this percentage to cast doubt on the reliability of the data.

As a result of the criticism that the University of California does not enroll enough minority students, with the exception of the Asian group, recruitment programs and special admissions have been implemented to attract students to the University System.

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGES

The nineteen campuses of the California State University and Colleges System accept the next to the highest in ability of the high school students in California. The CSUC use an eligibility index for admissions comprised of high school grade point average on all course work completed in the last three years and test scores of the S.A.T. or A.C.T. Special admissions are available for disadvantaged students.

The CSUC has the function of teaching at the four and five-year level. The system cannot award doctorates. Some CSUC schools cooperate with some University of California campuses in doctoral programs; however, the participating U.C. school awards the degree.

Minority enrollment in the CSUC is higher than U.C.:

| | Undergraduate | Graduate |
|---|---|---|
| American Indian | 2,568 (1.45%) | 556 (1.21%) |
| Asian | 15,525 (8.79%) | 3,539 (7.72%) |
| Black | 14,407 (8.15%) | 2,667 (5.82%) |
| Chicano | 15,990 (9.05%) | 3,079 (6.7%) |
| White | 128,215 (72.56%) | 36,021 (78.54%) |
| Declined to State | (26%) | (32%) [6] |

The percentage of students who refused to identify their ethnicity in the CSUC is higher for both undergraduate and graduates than the University of California's percentages. While the University of California undergraduates refused to identify themselves by 10%, the CSUC almost tripled that percentage to 26%. The graduate percentages are closer to each other other, i.e., U.C. 29% and CSUC 32%.

## CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The California Community Colleges functions have evolved since the early 1900's. It is difficult to write about the functions of the Colleges in the 1980's since the system is currently being redefined and its new function (s) are being shaped by state institutions. It is safe to speak about the way we were, what we are now, and what we are becoming. Prior to 1980, the function of the Community College was as follows in California:

1. To provide the first two years of a four year transfer program.
2. To provide access to all students who can profit from instruction, graduate or not from high school.
3. To meet the cultural and continuing education needs of the local community.
4. To provide community activities and services.
5. To provide occupational training
   a. Upgrade job skills.
   b. Provide new job entry level skills.
6. To provide an educational environment for the success of all students.

The functions of the Community College were teaching and meeting the needs of the Community that it served. There would be local control through a local board of trustees elected by the people of the district to run the College.

The Community College's emphasis on access to all people, success for all students, low cost, and the impact of the decline of the quality of high-school education, pushed enrollments past the one million mark in the Fall of 1978:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| American Indian | 12,751 | ( 1.48%) |
| Asian | 48,354 | ( 5.61%) |
| Black | 81,724 | ( 9.48%) |
| Chicano | 98,306 | (11.4 %) |
| White | 620,678 | (72.02%) |
| Declined to State | | (12%)[7] |

The percentage of the students who refused to identify their ethnicity in the California Community College system is comparable to the University of California's percentage of 10%; however, it is more than half the CSUC of 26%.

While the number of students continues to grow in the Community Colleges, the percentage of the overall enrollment of Mexican Americans has remained relatively static in the Colleges. Blacks have not done any better since the percentage fluctuates by one percent from year to year:

| | Mexican Americans | | Blacks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1976 | 99,025 | (10%) | 9% |
| 1977 | 92,209 | ( 9%) | 8% |
| 1978 | 98,644 | (10%) | 8% |
| 1979 | 101,374 | (10%) | 9% |
| 1980 | 128,079 | (10%) | 8%[8] |

The challenge for the next years is to increase the participation of underrepresented minorities in the California

Community Colleges. It is indeed a challenge to increase the enrollment in any Community College in California since the new finance rules and regulations do not encourage growth. There are many forces that threaten to remove from the most needed population access to quality education. The California Department of Finance, the California Postsecondary Commission, the Board of Governors of the Community College System, Legislature, Governor, and other state agencies are threatening the existence of the traditional functions of the Community Colleges in California. Recent negative reports about the quality of the Community Colleges programs have also affected the image of the Colleges as institutions that offer diverse educational programs of high quality.

First, differential funding is being proposed. Remedial courses would be funded at a lower level than the nonremedial. A course classification system will classify courses according to a specific function dictated by administrative code. No course can fulfill more than one function. Also there is a push to change the comprehensive Community College into an "either or" institution. This of course, is my own interpretation of the current status of Community Colleges. Transfer programs and occupational education seem to be the two missions that are emerging. Community services for the most part have dissapeared. Fees are now being levied for cultural events and the use of facilities has become expensive for outside groups.

Furthermore, the quality of the most important educational

programs in the California Community College system have been adversely affected by the widely publicized negative research finding on the quality of the transfer and vocational functions of the colleges.[9,10] Different reports were given to the University of California Board of Regents on the quality of the transfer program. Vocational education has also been made to appear to be better at proprietary schools than at the public Community College. The vocational research findings were given at a press conference and widely publicized in the Los Angeles Times. Moreover, state mandated policies now require faculty to assign "F" grades to those students who do not withdraw officially from classes. Probation is mandatory for those who overuse the "W" grade. These policies are designed to push out students out of the higher education system.

Tuition is on the horizon. California is the only state in the United States that does not charge tuition. The pressures to impose some form of tuition continue to mount in Sacramento. Leaders of Community Colleges ascertain that the imposition of tuition will have a negative impact on the disadvantaged.

Finally, retention continues to be a problem in the Community Colleges. It is not uncommon to have 60% attrition in some classes. Present funding mechanisms encourage the Colleges to have high numbers at the beginning of the semester, i.e., first and second census are used for funding; however, prerequisites in reading and writing seldom appear

in college catalogues. We actually allow students the opportunity to fail and many instructors see their first task in the classroom to "weed out the ones that do not belong" in the class. How many Hispanics are pushed out in this manner?

The higher education system is complex in California. Community Colleges will continue to receive students from minority backgrounds at a higher rate than the other two systems. Compare the 4,631 enrolled at the U.C., the 15,990 enrolled at the CSUC with the 98,306 enrolled at the Community Colleges. The enrollment in CCC comprised most of the higher enrollment of Hispanics in California. Black enrollment follows the same patter, i.e., 3,274 at U.C., 14,407 at CSUC, and 81,274 in the Community Colleges.

Minority students have poor reading and writing skills; have experienced failure in their educational experience in the past; and unless there is a concerted effort on the part of the Community College to improve the educational experience of all students, those students will not succeed. If the negative forces against access to the Community Colleges succeed we will most likely experience a reduction in the number of students from minority backgrounds who can enter the higher education system.

We must look very closely to the percentage of students who refused to identify themselves. I believe that the figures are significant; however, due to time limitations I cannot

pursue this topic at this time.

The constant pressures of the Community College to close the door to the non-traditional student are mounting at a fast rate. It is possible that in the 1990's the percentage of minority students will be lower than it is today due to the negative campaign against the Community Colleges and the lack of appreciation for the value of an education to all people.

NOTES

1. California Postsecondary Education Commission. Information Digest 80. Sacramento: CPEC, 1980, p.11
2. California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1980, p.9
3. California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1980, pp.5-6
4. The California Independent Schools and Colleges enrolled 192,205 students (187 institutions), awarded 2,923 Associate of Arts degrees (39 institutions), 20,076 bachelors degrees (109 institutions), 6,474 first professional degrees (52 institutions), and 2,329 doctorates (48 institutions). Private institutions employ 6,403 full time faculty.
5. California Postsecondary Education Commission. Equal Educational Opportunity in California Postsecondary Education Part III. Sacramento: CPEC, March 1980, p.4
6. California Postsecondary Education Commission. Equal..., p.4
7. California Postsecondary Education Commission. Equal..., p.4
8. Chancellor's Office. California Community Colleges. Information System Project. Student Data System. Enrollment by Race, Fall 1980, 1979, 1978, 1977, 1976. Sacramento: California Community Colleges, 1980
9. Kissler, Gerald. Trends Affecting Undergraduate Education in the University of California. Berkeley: Board of Regents of the University of California, October 16, 1980

   _____. Report of the Task Group on Retention and Transfer. Berkeley: Board of Regents of the University of California, June 1980

10. Wilms, Wellford. Vocational Training and Social Mobility, A Study of Public and Proprietary School Drop Outs. Washington: National Institute of Education, 1980